

XII.—*Obituary.*

Captain SHELLEY, Dr. A. B. MEYER, Mr. W. E. D. SCOTT,  
and Dr. CARL PARROT.

## Captain GEORGE ERNEST SHELLEY.

CAPTAIN SHELLEY, who died at Bournemouth on the 29th of November last after a long illness, was the youngest son of the late Mr. John Shelley, of Avington, Hants, the poet's younger brother. He was born in 1840 and educated privately in England, after which (1852 to 1855) he studied in France at the Lycée de Versailles. In 1862 he attended courses of Lectures on Applied Mechanics by Professor Tyndall and on Geology by Professor Ramsay. In March of that year he was elected a Fellow of the Geological Society.

Shelley joined the Grenadier Guards in 1863, but his gifted and scientific mind, and an aptitude for research, seemed to unfit him for the monotonous routine of a soldier's life, and after a few years' service in the Guards, he retired with the rank of Captain. A short time afterwards he was attached to a Commission sent out by the Government to South Africa, to initiate a geological survey.

Captain Shelley would, in all probability, have made his mark as a geologist, if circumstances had not diverted his attention to Ornithology, which henceforward became the chief and absorbing interest of his life. In 1872 he published his 'Handbook to the Birds of Egypt,' which was followed, in 1880, by his 'Monograph of the Nectariniidæ, or Family of Sun-birds.' This was a handsome quarto volume, profusely illustrated by the artist Keulemans. This work was the result of frequent expeditions to the African Continent and many years' study of bird-life in Australia, Burma, and the Portuguese Settlements in Angola. When Captain Shelley first visited the Ethiopian region little was known about the avifauna of this "metropolis of birds," where, as he tells us, "every bush resounds with their melody." The materials dealt with in that sumptuous volume on the

Sun-birds were published in Parts, from July 28, 1876, to February 1880. The Family of the Nectariniidæ, he tells us, inhabits Africa, Madagascar and the neighbouring islands, Palestine, Southern Asia, Sumatra, Java, Borneo, the Philippines, Celebes, New Guinea, North Australia, and the Papuan and Moluccan Archipelagos. They are not found in Europe or North Africa, Northern Asia, nor in any portion of the Western Hemisphere. Captain Shelley's first attraction towards the family of Sun-birds took place in Nubia, where he fell in with "the first truly tropical form of bird that he had ever procured." "The sense of pleasure"—as he tells us—"with which I preserved my first specimens of this beautiful little bird on the banks of the Nile above the First Cataract, and the engaging habits of the species, impressed me so much that on all my subsequent visits to the African Continent I paid especial attention to the Sun-birds in every country I visited." In 1870, Captain Shelley heard that the late Marquis of Tweeddale and Mr. Bowdler Sharpe contemplated the production of a Monograph of the Nectariniidæ, and it was only on their making no signs in this direction that, after the lapse of some years, he commenced to write his now famous work. To employ his own words: "If I have succeeded in reducing the family to a better state of order than it before exhibited, it is in a great measure due to the kindly assistance which I have received from ornithologists in all parts of the world; while at the same time I feel that I have left no stone unturned, nor spared any pains in my endeavour to make my Monograph as complete as circumstances would allow." Captain Shelley was ably assisted by Dr. Bowdler Sharpe, who put him in the right road at the commencement, and lent him every sort of assistance throughout, wherever doubtful points required advice. The late Marquis of Tweeddale generously placed the whole of his valuable collection of Sun-birds at Shelley's service. This included a large number of examples of the scarce Philippine forms, without which the work would have been imperfect. So great an undertaking required encouragement, especially at

the outset, and Dr. Günther gave Shelley every assistance at the British Museum, besides the stimulus he needed. Captain Shelley was an excellent shot and was never happier than when in pursuit of specimens of rare birds, which he collected for the information of ornithologists in all parts of the world.

In 1896 Shelley published the first volume of his 'Birds of Africa,' a work intended to consist of a series of handy volumes dealing with the Ethiopian Avifauna, each volume being in itself complete. Four volumes followed at intervals, but the first part of the fifth volume, which appeared in 1906, was destined to be the last from Shelley's own pen, for a sudden illness, a stroke of paralysis, brought his labours to an end.

When the first volume of 'The Birds of Africa' was published, Captain Shelley had sketched out the classification which he adopted down to the "Keys of the Species," which he had intended to bring out as the second volume of the Series. But as the number of known Ethiopian forms increased very rapidly he realized how imperfect these "Keys" would be by the time he came to write the histories of the species. He, therefore, decided to work out each family in a monographic form. The classification was compiled partly from Seebohm's 'Classification of Birds,' and partly from that proposed by Sharpe at the Ornithological Congress held at Buda-Pest in 1896.

It is understood that arrangements have been made with Mr. W. L. Selater, formerly Director of the South African Museum, Cape Town, and author of 'The Fauna of South Africa,' to complete Captain Shelley's work.

Captain Shelley was for many years an active member of the British Ornithologists' Union, and from 1870 to 1894 made numerous contributions, chiefly on African birds, to the pages of 'The Ibis,' as will be seen by our List of his principal publications. He possessed great natural abilities, with something of that genius which has made the family-name famous. Gifted as he was by nature, he might have turned his mind to anything, and would have made his mark

in almost any direction. He possessed a wonderful memory, an infinite capacity for taking pains, and a facility for literary expression, attributes in which he resembled his celebrated uncle, the Poet. In youth he strongly resembled the Poet in personal appearance, a fact imparted to the present writer, nearly fifty years ago, by one who remembered to have seen the young poet at Field Place. To the last hour of his life Captain Shelley was distinguished by that inborn gentleness, modesty, and courteous bearing which constitute, in the highest sense, the well-born gentleman. It was the same quality in the persecuted poet which, after Shelley's death, evoked the verdict of Byron, and the same may be said with equal truth of his nephew: "Shelley"—said Byron—"was, in every situation in life, always the perfect gentleman."

Captain Shelley was for many years well known as a first-rate pigeon-shot. We once heard him playfully remark, "I shew my love for dicky-birds by killing them!" As a pigeon-shot he won many trophies at Hurlingham, at the Gun Club, and at Monte Carlo.

In 1889, Captain Shelley married Janet, daughter of the late Mr. E. Andrewes, who, with two sons and a daughter, survives him.

R. EDGCUMBE.

#### APPENDIX.

##### *List of the late Captain Shelley's principal Publications.*

1870.

THE IBIS.

Letter on *Elanus cæruleus*, p. 149.

Description of Two new Birds from Egypt, p. 445.

1871.

THE IBIS.

Contributions to the Ornithology of Egypt, pp. 38, 131, 309.

1872.

THE IBIS.

With T. E. BUCKLEY.

Two montbs' Bird-collecting on the Gold Coast, p. 281.

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A Handbook to the Birds of Egypt.

1873.

THE IBIS.

Descriptions of Six new Species of West African Birds, p. 138.

1874.

THE IBIS.

Description of a new Timaliine Bird from West Africa, p. 89.

Note on *Dryotriorchis*, a new Genus of Harrier-Eagles from West Africa, p. 90.

1875.

THE IBIS.

Three Months on the Coast of South Africa, p. 59.

A few stray Notes on African Birds, p. 379.

1879.

PROC. ZOOLOG. SOC.

On a Collection of Birds from the Comoro Islands, p. 673.

Descriptions of Two new Species of African Birds, p. 679.

1880.

THE IBIS.

Descriptions of Four new Species of East African Birds, p. 333.

A Monograph of the Nectariniidæ, or Family of Sun-birds.

1881.

THE IBIS.

On new Species of East African Birds, p. 115.

PROC. ZOOLOG. SOC.

List of Birds recently collected by Dr. Kirk in Eastern Africa, p. 561.

1882.

PROC. ZOOLOG. SOC.

List of Birds recently collected by Dr. Kirk in Eastern Africa, p. 304.

List of the Birds sent home by Mr. Joseph Thomson from the River Rovuma, East Africa, p. 302.

On some new Species of Birds from South Africa, p. 336.

THE IBIS.

On a Collection of Birds made by Mr. J. S. Jameson in South-Eastern Africa, with Notes by Mr. T. Ayres, pp. 236, 349.

1883.

THE IBIS.

On the Columbidae of the Ethiopian Region, p. 258.

A List of the Birds collected by the late Mr. W. A. Forbes in the Niger Region, p. 538.

1884.

## PROC. ZOOL. SOC.

On Five new or little-known Species of East African Birds, represented in Mr. H. H. Johnston's First Collection from the Kilima-njaro District, p. 554.

## THE IBIS.

On Two new Species of Birds from Africa, p. 45.

1885.

## PROC. ZOOL. SOC.

With H. H. JOHNSTON.

On the Collection of Birds made by Mr. H. H. Johnston in the Kilima-njaro District; with Field-notes by Mr. H. H. Johnston, F.R.G.S., p. 222.

## THE IBIS.

Review of the Species of the Family Coliidae, p. 307.

On Mr. Lort Phillips's Collection of Birds from Somaliland, p. 389.

1886 and 1887.

## THE IBIS.

A Review of the Species of the Family Ploceidae of the Ethiopian Region, 1886, p. 301; 1887, p. 1.

Description of a rare Species of Plover from the Cameroons Coast, 1887, p. 417.

## PROC. ZOOL. SOC.

With H. H. JOHNSTON.

On a Collection of Birds made by Mr. H. H. Johnston in the Cameroons Mountain, 1887, p. 122.

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Appendix to Capt. A. Moloney's 'Sketch of the Forestry of West Africa,' containing Ornithology, Coleoptera, and Diurnal Lepidoptera of the Gambia. 1887.

1888.

## PROC. ZOOL. SOC.

On a Collection of Birds made by Emin Pasha in Equatorial Africa, p. 17.

## THE IBIS.

On the Hornbills of the Ethiopian Region, p. 47.

List of Birds collected by Mr. F. J. Jackson in Eastern Africa, p. 287.

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Bird-portion of F. L. James's 'The Unknown Horn of Africa: an Exploration from Berbera to the Leopard River.'

1889.

PROC. ZOOLOG. SOC.

On the Birds collected by Mr. H. C. V. Hunter, F.Z.S., in Eastern Africa, p. 356.

THE IBIS.

On some new Genera and Species of the Family Capitonidæ, p. 475.

1890.

THE IBIS.

On a Collection of Birds made by the late Mr. J. S. Jameson on the Aruwihimi River, Upper Congo, p. 156.

1891.

Catalogues of the Picariæ, Indicatoridæ, Capitonidæ, Cuculidæ, and Musophagidæ in the Collection of the British Museum, in vol. xix. of the Catalogue of Birds.

1893 and 1894.

THE IBIS.

List of Birds collected by Mr. Alexander Whyte, F.Z.S., in Nyasaland, 1893, p. 1; 1894, pp. 1, 461.

1896.

THE IBIS.

On a Collection of Birds from Mount Chiradzulu, in the Sbiré Highlands, Nyasaland, p. 177.

On a Collection of Birds made by Mr. Alfred Sharpe in the Zomba District of Nyasaland, p. 229.

1897.

THE IBIS.

On the Birds collected by Mr. A. Whyte during his Expedition to the Nyika Plateau in N. Nyasaland, p. 518.

1898.

THE IBIS.

On the Final Collections of Birds made by Mr. A. Whyte in Nyasaland, p. 376.

A List of the Birds collected by Mr. Alfred Sharpe, C.B., in Nyasaland, p. 551.

1899.

THE IBIS.

On a Collection of Birds from the Vicinity of Zomba, British Central Africa, forwarded by Lt.-Col. W. H. Manning, with a Note by P. L. Sclater, p. 281.

On a Collection of Birds from the Tanganyika Plateau, in British Central Africa, p. 364.

1901.

## THE IBIS.

On some Collections of Birds from the Protectorate of British Central Africa, received in 1899 and 1900. With an Introduction by P. L. Sclater, p. 161.

On a Collection of Birds from Nyasaland, p. 586.

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The Birds of Africa, comprising all the Species which occur in the Ethiopian Region, Vols. i.-v. pt. 1 (1896-1906).

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With much regret we have also to record the death of our Foreign Member, DR. A. B. MEYER, and of two other Ornithologists, who, although not members of our Union, have done excellent work for our Science. These are Mr. W. E. D. SCOTT, the author of an important memoir on the Birds of Jamaica, published in 'The Auk' (1901-2), and other papers, and Dr. CARL PARROT, of Munich, the Founder of the "Ornithologische Gesellschaft in Bayern," and the Editor of its Journal. We hope to be able to give further details on their work in our next number.

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XIII.—*Notices of recent Ornithological Publications.*

[Continued from p. 182.]

28. *Allen on Brisson's 'Genera of Birds.'*

[Collation of Brisson's Genera of Birds with those of Linnæus. By J. A. Allen. Bull. American Mus. N. H. xxviii, p. 317 (1910).]

This is a complete and most useful *résumé* of the much-discussed question of the validity of Brisson's generic names of Birds, which those who are interested in terminology should not fail to study carefully. To those who use the last and most perfect edition of the 'Systema Naturæ' as the commencement of Zoological Nomenclature it is not of such great importance. But, whatever may be the result, we believe that the "Ultra-prioritarians," being not agreed amongst themselves, will fail in their attempts to persuade the writers in Zoology to adopt a uniform nomenclature,